

JUSTICE COURT REFORM

Task Force Report and Recommendations

Judge Paul Farr, *chair of Justice Court Reform Task Force*

Guiding Principles

1. **Qualified Judge**

to preside over every misdemeanor and small claims case

2. **On-the-Record Appeal**

enhances public trust and confidence; eliminates *de novo* review

3. **Right to Counsel**

at every stage of proceedings for all accused of committing a crime

4. **Article VIII Courts**

operate all courts of record under unified state oversight

5. **Substance Abuse and Mental Health**

readily available, high-quality treatment services for misdemeanor cases

Recommended Reform

- **Structural Proposal**

- create **new division** of the district courts to handle all misdemeanor and small claims cases;
 - justice courts would continue to handle infraction cases
 - district courts would continue to handle felony cases
- Many statutory and rule modifications would be necessary to accomplish these structural reforms, including judge qualification and service requirements, court location arrangements, new rules of procedure, requirements for defense counsel involvement, new appellate processes, additional appellate judge positions and staff, etc.

Next Steps

- **Ascertain the Fiscal Impacts of Reforms**
 - Careful study of the fiscal impacts associated with these reforms is needed.

**Full 15-page report
available in meeting materials**

Questions?